

Sims House
2803 M Street, N.W.
Georgetown
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-111

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71-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington Planning and Service Center
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

SIMS HOUSE

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Location: 2803 M Street, N.W., Washington, D. C.
In 1887, Bridge Street was renamed M Street.

Present Owner: Dela Corporation (William Shrader).

Present Occupant: Shrader Sound, Inc.

Present Use: Audio equipment and supply store.

Statement of
Significance: Formerly a dwelling house, this building has
been converted to commercial use, yet it retains
its gable roof and dormers and many of the
original details above the first floor.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The following information is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which this structure was built. Reference is to the records of the Recorder of Deeds, District of Columbia. The site is part of Lot 11 in Square 42 in Holmead's Addition to Georgetown. The square is now numbered 1212. The site is described as "beginning at the intersection of the north line of M Street with the west line of 28th Street and running thence west along said north line of M Street 17.92 feet; thence east along the south line of an alley 5 feet wide; thence east along the south line of said alley 17.92 feet to the west line of 28th Street; thence south along said west line of 28th Street 95 feet to the beginning."

Note: There are numerous court items against one of the possible claimants on this property, named Mary Smith.

1895 Deed February 20, 1895, recorded February 21, 1895 in Liber 1990, folio 259.
Martha Lewis Smith (born Lewis; one of the children of William Lewis, deceased)
To
Esther Rebecca L. Sims (Born Lewis; one of the children of William Lewis, deceased)

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DC
GEO
71-

- 1948 Deed January 27, 1948, recorded February 4, 1948
in Liber 8677, folio 240.
Otto Hermann (Administrator of the Estate of
Esther R. L. Sims by the decree of District Court
of the United States for the District of Columbia)
To
Irene Mason
- 1848 Tax Sale January 27, 1948, recorded February 4,
1948 in Liber 8677, folio 242.
Irene Mason
To
Mary Smith
- 1948 Deed February 2, 1948 recorded February 4, 1948
in Liber 8677, folio 244.
Mary Smith
To
Bernard J. Atchison
- 1948 Deed May 26, 1948, recorded June 1, 1948
in Liber 8756, folio 269.
Bernard J. Atchison and wife Dorothy
To
William C. Shrader and wife Margaret E.
Tenants by entirety

2. Date of erection: Probably early 19th century.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: None known.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: The following permits were listed in the Building Permit Department, District of Columbia:

159356 November, 1932.
307373 June, 1948 for repair.
31828 June, 1948 for plumbing.
A12530 July, 1950 for plumbing.
A11454 August 18, 1950 for repair: "reroof with
Casey fire chex asbestos class A-1 shingles."
\$250.00.
A16201 January 12, 1951 for repair.
A46539 August 14, 1953 building permit: "build brick
addition to dwelling; enclose stairs and fire
protect halls". \$11,000.00.
A58020 August 13, 1954 building permit renewal.
A59216 September 21, 1954.
A61400 December 8, 1954 fire escape installation.
A63228 February 18, 1955 installation of cooling
tower.
A63878 March 11, 1955 installation of new steps and
landing in front of building.

B23536 May, 1957

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DC
GEO
71-

6. Important old views: None known.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:
Washington Directories provide the following tenant information:

1898-1920	John N. Sims, clerk Post Office Department
1925-1940	Esther L. Sims
1948	vacant
1954-1966	Shrader Sound, Incorp.

Prepared by Dr. James Philip Noffsinger
Architect
National Park Service
August 15, 1966

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Sims House exterior retains much of its original domestic character in spite of extensive recent remodeling and additions. Situated facing the convergence of Pennsylvania Avenue and M Street at the periphery of Georgetown, the Sims House is an architectural harbinger of the historic area.
2. Condition of fabric: Good; exterior and interior were reconditioned in the 1950's and have been subsequently well maintained.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 34'-11" (four bays) x 95' (including recent northern additions); two-and-one-half stories plus ground floor.
2. Foundations: Brick to floor of light wells; some indication of stone below in northeast corner of east well. Water table indicated above grade on additions.
3. Wall construction: South facade common bond; much alteration evident, especially above two first-floor west bays. Flemish bond east elevation appears to be original, although area around chimney has been re-worked. Brick 1954 addition to north is common bond.

4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: Cantilevered wooden-floored cast-iron-railed balcony spans south front at first floor; modern wrought-iron-railed stairs and landing bridge areaway. Wooden five-stepped wooden-railed stoop parallel to east wall leads over areaway to east door.
5. Chimneys: Large brick chimneys at east and west ends of roof appear to date after construction of side walls as brick bonding and size differs from original fabric. The chimneys measure 1'-8" x approximately 9'; two-course brick cap projects from each chimney two courses below top. One modern clay pot is visible above each stack.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: South doorway has been reworked: brick lintels with keystones over door and adjoining window to west differ in form from lintels of other openings on facade. Southeast door (east elevation) is six-paneled, with transom and simple wooden casing. Flat cornice above rests upon console brackets, with paired pendants. Door to south of triple segmental-arched openings on east elevation of addition is also wooden, six-paneled. Paneled door in east well is of similar design, unused. Both ground and first floor level doors on south elevation are modern, wooden with glazed panes.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Six-over-six-light double-hung wooden sash, wooden lintels and sills. Original first floor windows on south elevation are longer than those on second floor and first floor, east elevation; windows of second floor, east elevation are shortest. Lintels above south windows, first floor, are undecorated; those on second floor have wooden moldings. Flat brick lintels on east and north elevations. Two-paneled brick header sills on north elevation. Two-paneled louvered shutters probably do not date to original construction of building.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gabled (east-west) roof is covered by modern asphalt shingles; flat roof over additions is built-up.
 - b. Framing: Wood.

- c. Cornice, eaves: Brick dentils at south eave project just under modern metal gutter; single projecting course below dentils. Four-course cornice of rear additions is composed of (upper to lower: two courses headers, one course stretchers, one course headers).
- d. Dormers: Two symmetrically placed dormers on each gable: six-over-six-light double-hung wooden sash windows, plain gable facings, shingled roofs and sides.

C. Technical Description of Interior:

Interiors have been remodeled into ground floor repair center, first floor retail area and second-floor offices. Only the garret area appears to be relatively unaltered. Numerous non-permanent partitions and suspended ceilings have destroyed domestic quality of the interiors.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Sited on the north-west corner of 28th and M Streets, N.W., the Sims House faces south toward the juncture of M Street and Pennsylvania Avenue at the extreme eastern end of Georgetown's commercial strip along M Street. Located in an area less architecturally distinguished than others in the commercial district, the Sims House is noteworthy in comparison with neighboring structures.
2. Enclosures: Stone retaining walls along east and south elevations provide light circulation areas for ground level.
3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks: Abuts public sidewalks to the east and south.
5. Landscaping: None.

Prepared by Thomas R. Martinson
Student Assistant Architect
National Park Service
August 24, 1966